

Warning Signs

Silicosis Symptoms:

If you have any of these symptoms and were exposed to silica dust, see a doctor for care.

- A persistent cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Feeling tired
- Loss of appetite
- Losing weight
- Fever
- Skin turning bluish or pale
- Enlarged fingertips
- Getting respiratory infections often
- Hearing wheezing or crackling sounds in the chest
- Having trouble breathing during physical activities



Shasta County
Health & Human
Services Agency



Silicosis Resources

For More Information



**Protect Your
Lungs:
Understand
Silicosis and How
to Stay Healthy**

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What is Silicosis?

Breathing in tiny dust particles from materials with crystalline silica can lead to lung problems. These particles get stuck in the lungs and cause inflammation and scarring. This condition, known as silicosis, makes it harder for the lungs to take in oxygen. This illness can harm your lungs permanently and gets worse over time.

Silicosis usually shows up after 10 years of being around silica dust, but it can happen faster with heavy exposure. Even after you stop being around silica at work, it can still develop or get worse.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for silicosis, and some people may need a lung transplant.



Overview of Silicosis

What is Crystalline Silica?

Tiny crystalline silica particles can be so small that you breathe them into the deepest parts of your lungs. These particles are often created when you cut, grind, or drill materials with silica. Materials like sand, stone, concrete, and mortar have crystalline silica. It is also used to make things like glass, pottery, ceramics, bricks, and fake stone.

Who is at risk?

Many different jobs have the risk of silica exposure. People who work in construction and handle concrete by cutting, drilling, or crushing are at risk. Also, people working in foundries, glass manufacturing, and mining with silica-rich materials face the same risks.

How Long You're Exposed and Risk Factors

The risk of silicosis is higher when you have been around silica dust for a long time, especially in places with bad ventilation. Other risk factors include not having enough protection, long exposure (usually more than 10 years), and having lung problems. If you smoke, you're at even higher risk.

Keeping Your Workplace Safe

Ways to Prevent Silicosis

- **Use water** to control dust and tools with dust collectors.
- **Avoid sweeping up dry dust.** Use wet methods or special vacuums.
- Set up zones for high dust tasks.
- Provide the right safety gear like **masks** (NIOSH-approved N95 or better), **eye protection**, and **special clothing**.
- **Teach** your workers about silica dangers, how to use the right gear, and how to stay safe. Encourage them to talk about concerns and offer learning resources.
- Take part in a medical program when silica levels are too high.
- Look at different ways to **make jobs safer**.

